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## Educação sexual para adolescentes por docentes de um centro de educação comunitária

Sex education for adolescents by teachers from a community education center

Educación sexual para adolescentes por profesores de un centro de educación comunitaria

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### ABSTRACT

**Objective:** raising teachers' knowledge about sexuality, to provide subsidies for the development of education practices in health care by Nursing. **Methods:** a descriptive study of a qualitative approach developed in a Community Education Center, with middle and high school teachers (n: 15). After compiling the data, there were analyzed and structured by semantic similarities. This study was a research project approved by the Research Ethics Committee, CAAE: 02700212.4.0000.5214. **Results:** in the research, four categories emerged: "The importance of the theme approach in School", "Sexuality demonstrations by students", "The role of teachers in sexual education of students" and "How the school should address the theme?". **Conclusion:** the approach is based on a vertical transmission of knowledge, based mainly on biological aspects.

**Descriptors:** Sexuality; Nursing; Teachers.

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## RESUMO

**Objetivo:** levantar o conhecimento dos professores sobre a sexualidade, para fornecer subsídios para o desenvolvimento de práticas de educação em saúde pela Enfermagem. **Métodos:** um estudo descritivo de abordagem qualitativa desenvolvido em um Centro de Educação Comunitária com professores do ensino fundamental e médio (n: 15). Após a produção dos dados, estes foram analisados e estruturados por similaridades semânticas. O estudo teve o projeto de pesquisa aprovado pelo Comitê de Ética em Pesquisa, CAAE: 02700212.4.0000.5214. **Resultados:** no desenvolvimento da pesquisa emergiram quatro categorias: “A importância da abordagem do tema na Escola”, “Demonstrações de Sexualidade pelos alunos”, “O Papel dos professores na Educação sexual dos alunos” e “Como a escola deve tratar o tema?”. **Conclusão:** a abordagem utilizada baseia-se em uma transmissão vertical de conhecimento, embasada principalmente em aspectos biológicos.

**Descritores:** Sexualidade; Enfermagem; Professores.

## RESUMEN

**Objetivo:** aumentar el conocimiento de los profesores acerca de la sexualidad para proporcionar subvenciones para el desarrollo de las prácticas de enseñanza en la salud por la Enfermería. **Método:** un estudio descriptivo de enfoque cualitativo desarrollado en un Centro de Educación de la Comunidad, con profesores de las escuelas media y secundaria (n: 15). Después de recopilar los datos, los mismos fueron analizados y estructurados por similitudes semánticas. Este estudio fue un proyecto de investigación aprobado por el Comité de Ética en la Investigación, CAAE: 02700212.4.0000.5214. **Resultados:** en la investigación emergieron cuatro categorías: “La importancia del enfoque temático en la Escuela”, “Manifestaciones de sexualidad de los estudiantes”, “El papel de los docentes en la educación sexual de los estudiantes” y “¿Como la escuela debe abordar la cuestión?”. **Conclusión:** el enfoque se basa en una transmisión vertical de los conocimientos, basada principalmente en los aspectos biológicos.

**Descriptores:** Sexualidad; Enfermería; Profesores.

## INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a period of development, marked by physical, biological and psychological changes, being understood in the age group from 10 to 19 years old. In contrast, recent studies on sexuality characterize adolescence at the beginning of sexual maturation, puberty.<sup>1</sup> During this period, the reproductive age and sexual issues become more evident and striking, individuals can take risk behaviors, unprepared for this and thus contributing to the increased susceptibility of infection with sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) or an unwanted pregnancy.<sup>2-3</sup>

It is a confrontational phase, which requires sensitivity in addressing certain issues, such as sexuality. This is because the subject is still surrounded by myths, taboos, values, beliefs and stereotypes that contribute to a distorted and dissociated view of reality. This, almost always is connected to sex, reproductive functions and perpetuation of the species historically censored by institutions such as church law, school and family.<sup>4</sup>

Over the years the subject has undergone a “deinstitutionalization”, and today the main information about sex and sexuality available to young people are those exposed by the free media or formulated from everyday experiences, in conversations with friends, colleagues and partners.<sup>5</sup>

This “trivialization” of the theme turns out to provide unreliable and discredited information. The reflection of this is the deficiency by adolescents’ knowledge about their own bodies, their sexuality, sexual desires, contraceptive methods and protection against STD’s. Sexuality is an integral part of the human experience spectrum from birth, and should be lived healthily and full.<sup>6</sup>

It is understood that for the young it is difficult to process this information and qualify them, since they do not have insight or experience in the field, hitherto unheard of in their lives. Thus, a mediator in this process is necessary, in order to protect young people, represented mainly by the family and school because it was the nearest adolescents institutions and may act as mediators between the information which they possess and their actions.<sup>7</sup>

However, what we see is that parents find it difficult to fulfill this role, the complexity in establishing dialogue or by the fact that they do not feel qualified to address the subject. In schools the approach is made in a superficial way and discussions are still very restricted to the field of biology and anatomy, leaving aside issues such as affection, feelings, experiences, expectations and fears.<sup>8</sup>

It is understood that the construction of sexuality overrides the biological sense and transcends to the cultural, implying the mobilization of knowledge, learning, skills and concrete social possibilities coming from the set of ideas, values, attitudes and social skills seized lifelong. In this sense the school, for being the main center for socio-cultural-pedagogical training, is configured in the ideal place for this debate, since that is where the teenager complements the values learned at home and their culture.<sup>9</sup>

At school the teacher is the main tool for performing these sexual education measures as it is the symbol of wisdom and knowledge, and also the closest to young people, so the most suitable to develop this dialogue. Schools should work sex education throughout the national territory. Added to this there is the need for this dialogue to be done by every individual teacher in the discipline, based on the mainstreaming of the contents. Thus, this issue will be continuously deepened as it is being addressed.<sup>10</sup>

Based on the object of this study, it is defined in the experiences of teachers in the classroom and his contact with the sexuality issue, the objective is to analyze the teachers’ knowledge about sexuality in adolescence, as well as the mechanisms used for the same approach with their adolescent students. It is hoped that this knowledge may provide a basis for the development of education practices in health and interventions for promoting sexual health of adolescents.

Based on current and relevance of this study is understood that nursing, by developing individual and collective cultural educational practices, is in school enabling environment for implementation of these practices.

## METHODS

It is a descriptive study of a qualitative approach developed in a Community Education Center which serves students from the 4<sup>th</sup> to the 9<sup>th</sup> year of the Brazilian Northeast capital. The school was intentionally selected because it is reference in the study area, with elementary school students from different neighborhoods of the capital.

The sample consisted of the said school teachers, selected through simple random sampling process, resulting in 15 participants. They teach classes in various disciplines that make up the basic school curriculum: Biology, Science, Geography, English and Portuguese, Arts, Mathematics, Physical Education, and History.

Participants were teachers with permanent employment contract with the school, working on the same for at least one year, and after being presented to the purpose of the study, were able to present will or not to participate.

For data collection, there were conducted individual interviews with the subjects, guided by a script with open and closed questions related to socioeconomic, demographic data and specific questions on the subject. The interview was conducted in a private room of the school and recorded, after due authorization by the participants, with 30 minutes duration on average.

Data collection took place between August and September 2013, after the interviews analyzed the speeches of the deponents grouping them into categories. The analysis was based on Collective Subject Discourse method, which seeks to organize the empirical data of verbal nature obtained in the interviews, grouping collective thinking in categories originated from the key phrases taken from the interviews, which consist of verbatim transcripts of the speech of participants, which reveal the essence of the testimony.

The development of the study met national and international standards of ethics in research involving human subjects, being approved by the Ethics Committee in Research of UFPI, CAAE: 02700212.4.0000.5214. All participants signed the free and informed consent term.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Of the 15 teachers participating in the study, 12 were male, with an average age of 39 years old. Predominated singles teachers (58%), and 82% had at least one child, of these only 20% had teen. Regarding work shift, 26% worked only one shift, 62% worked in two shifts and 12% worked three shifts as teachers. Regarding school education, all had higher education and 23% specialization course. In addition, 72% were Catholic and 28% called themselves Evangelicals. After the interview with the teachers, it continued with the

analysis of the interviews, which allowed up to 4 units of meaning described below.

Sexuality is seen as essential in the curricula of schools in Brazil, but still set on a subject difficult to approach by most Brazilian educators. In fact the school is a privileged place for discussions of incitement, reflections and doubts surveys about the theme because it has historical role of commitment to the holistic development of its students.<sup>11</sup>

### The importance of the theme approach in School

Most teachers recognize the need to approach the subject in schools and raise it as justification for the increasingly early onset of sexual life, the constant presence of pregnancies in their teenage students, as well as the risk of becoming infected with some kind of STD; although there is difficulty in distinguishing the concepts of education and sexual orientation.

*It is very important to speak about this issue, why there you avoid problems such as unwanted pregnancy, STDs... (TEACHER 01)*

*Nowadays teenagers join much earlier in sexual activities. So it's nice to have guidance for them to have safe sex to prevent sexually transmitted diseases, pregnancy. (TEACHER 02)*

*It's good to talk, why there you tackle sexually transmitted diseases, pregnancy, which is what else happens in our world and can disrupt the studies. (TEACHER 08)*

*They have to be aware of the risks involving sexuality that not only is the issue of benefits has risks too, the issues of disease, to get pregnant. (TEACHER 05)*

In schools discussions involving sexuality of adolescents are still very much focused on the field of biology, covering aspects such as prevention of pregnancy and STDs. It is understood the importance of these issues for teens; however the only encompass these aspects schools restrict the chance to focus on the most relevant questions from students.<sup>9</sup>

In this environment the teacher becomes the right person to address these issues, to be a reliable and meaningful adult for the student. For this it is necessary to understand what conditions they have to fulfill this role. It was noticed that the contributors to this study were blunt in stating the need to work will thematic adolescent sexuality in the curricula of Brazilian schoolchildren, testimonials that are in line with other studies in which teachers surveyed attach great importance to the development of sex education in schools.<sup>4</sup>

It is important that this education may have a preventive character, orientation, integration and rehabilitation of adolescents, since pregnancy is every day more present in reality the same and consequently the school, as reported in this study, in which all teachers reported having in their

classroom at least a pregnant teenager, a fact also reported in other similar studies.<sup>4,12</sup>

The lack of guidance and clarification about contraceptive methods, sources of discredited information and how that information is passed grounded in speech, in an objective and focused way just for the exposure ready and absolute ideas, are associated with poor adherence of young people to contraceptive methods. It is important that sex education in school is not guided by formulas made, but you can discuss the issues and seek solutions jointly and participatory manner.<sup>11</sup>

## Demonstrations of Sexuality by students

The biggest demonstrations sexuality perceived by teachers are still linked to sex, which reveals that even the teachers still have difficulties in differentiating the two concepts. The issues related to the design (pregnancy and abortion) and early initiation into sexual life are the most constant day-to-day.

*Just now I had an experience in the classroom, a girl of 13 years old, already had an abortion twice. (TEACHER 15)*

*We always know of a student who rushed and had to abort (TEACHER 10)*

*Unfortunately abortion is common here. (TEACHER 06)*

*It has always girls who appear pregnant here. (TEACHER 14)*

The early onset of sexual activity is treated as a decisive also for acquiring STDs and abortion, which reinforces the need for intervention in schools.<sup>13</sup> Abortion along with masturbation and other matters related to the sexual act, it is part of a series of taboos to which it assigns the understanding that talking about it is a stimulus to practice over this school, and the family makes, avoids the subject approach working the "polite sex".<sup>14</sup>

Since done properly, the sexual approach can clarify relevant questions, elaborating measures that could include these students in the learning process actively and participant, mainly through health education practices.

## The role of teachers in sex education of the students

When asked about what their role in the sexual education of students, teachers reported the need to update on the theme, while others believe that the responsibility lies with the school teachers of the natural sciences, especially biology. Some teachers showed that address only when it occasionally "appears", however this is done in a superficial way.

*There are some cross-cutting themes, which address the issue of sexuality, the body and how it works; I think it is the teacher's role to pull it. (TEACHER 13)*

*Including science teacher, he has the most ability to address well it [sexuality]. (TEACHER 12)*

*My discipline is Portuguese, but from time to time we talk in class, does not address this issue more deeply and, yes, more superficially even why it is difficult to talk about it, but it's very important. (TEACHER 04)*

*When I pick up a text that involves teenage pregnancy or prostitution, I will attempt to show how it works in reality, the issue of sexuality. (TEACHER 11)*

*I always take advantage, I do not have that part in my course plan, but whenever there is any comment on this subject I take to give some guidance, give some advice, so based on what I know [...] (07 PROFESSOR)*

Many teachers still have difficulty distinguishing these two variables. Sex education should be left to the family, while the school paper orientation, ie, that this guidance should be made already exists a basis in the home environment.<sup>10</sup>

Because it is a complex and a multidimensional issue, sexuality is still surrounded by questions from the teachers themselves. Examples of this are the findings of this research in align with other studies where teachers reveal difficulty in approach the subject and do not feel safe to deepening the same in classroom.<sup>4,7</sup>

This occurs due to lack of updating the teacher of most Brazilian schools about the subject. A study conducted in Brazil<sup>11</sup> shows that 73% of teachers surveyed had never participated in any training or qualification to talk about sexuality at school, which answers the high insecurity index with it.

## How school should treat the theme?

Teachers recognize the role of schools in shaping sexual education and elect to this mechanisms such as training, lectures and inserting a subject or project aimed at the subject. Teachers also emphasized the need for experience of sexuality and the importance of family in this process.

*The approach at school is important, because the teenager himself does not much talk with the family. Also, can integrate the family to have better adhesion. (TEACHER 15)*

*You have to approach, talk about sex for them to do safely [...] And it has to be continued in an integrated manner between all disciplines (TEACHER 03)*

*It should be placed in the student's daily life (TEACHER 08)*

*It can be worked as an interdisciplinary project with sexuality content, involving history, national sexuality policies. (TEACHER 09)*

*Even made a proposal to the coordinator to make an interdisciplinary project at school, and I realized a certain*

*resistance from the board and certain teachers on the job, I think why is controversial even, right? (TEACHER 05)*

*It would be interesting if we had a partnership with other institutions to provide lectures, readings, films, because so, although the student today has a lot of information on the internet and in other media, they still do not make good use of this information. (TEACHER 01)*

where young people can clear their doubts and can become disseminators of knowledge.

It is necessary that the school can provide the faculty to constant updates and training about the theme, preparing them to approach this subject.<sup>15</sup> This training can be done through alliances with Basic Health Units, Health Secretariat or other institutions since it is made by a professional prepared to do so, such as the nurse.

This continuing education should extend to all individual teachers in the discipline since the mainstreaming is considered essential in the thematic approach in question, and can be addressed in all disciplines since contemplates much more than the biology of bodies and/or issues of reproduction. Moreover, it is important not to assign ratings or notes to the work of not providing these mandatory status or something imposing.<sup>9</sup>

Other methodological strategies can be developed in the teaching process, for better adhesion of the contents passed on if they are integrative, based on the collective nature of joint dialogue, respect reality, individuality and experiences of young people and can include the family in this process. It should focus on the doubts and seek remedy them when possible.<sup>16</sup>

It is important, still, that students can be motivated to become active subjects in the learning process, making them aware of the relevant issues the theme and its consequences.<sup>17</sup> The family is very important in this process, and their inclusion can mean the continuation of dialogue at home.<sup>18</sup> Nursing can articulate these two groups through practices focused on health education promoting this dialogue and the formation of groups working towards having discussed.<sup>16</sup>

## CONCLUSIONS

The approach used by teachers is based on a vertical transmission of knowledge, grounded mainly on biological aspects (pregnancy, STDs) without considering the particular experiences of adolescents and their subjective and particular aspects.

Although the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases and unwanted pregnancies are indeed essential issues to be discussed, the discovery of sexuality by these teenagers is not limited to this. The weakness of this group to deal with their feelings and the feelings of others, and the developing responsibility to become involved in affective and sexual relationships should be the focus of discussion and questioning between the school and the students.

Still becomes necessary that the school, in its role as an educator entity, create a safe and welcoming environment

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